



[Bertolt Brecht](#)

Drama and Poetry

Live drama and street theatre are always going to be part of any study of Agitprop.

But in South Africa, the actual tradition of political theatre that existed during the struggle against apartheid, and which was associated with the actor/playwright [Athol Fugard](#) in particular, and with the director [Barney Simon](#), is practically discontinued at the present time and for some years past, with the notable exception of the efforts of actor/director/playwright [John Kani](#).

Acting, directing, producing and all of the dramatic performing arts continue to be cultivated in relation to film and television. But live theatre as a mass phenomenon is hardly present in South African streets and towns. Insofar as live drama does exist, it is usually in theatres that are behind walls in Casino (gambling) complexes, while the theatres that formerly prospered are often standing dark and neglected.

The great exponent of political drama, apart from William Shakespeare, was the German communist Bertolt Brecht (1898-1956).

The effect of television has been to commodify and to render unfruitful the impact of drama on the lives of the people. Television becomes the wallpaper of our lives.

All of the above applies as well to stand-up comedy, variety and cabaret, for the time being, and to Ballet and Classical Music, including Opera, which flourish in socialist countries, but in South Africa are elite pursuits.

In the apartheid years there was a performing group called [Amandla Cultural Ensemble](#), also known as the Amandla Group. It was high quality and it made a great impact. The Amandla Group were recorded as musicians, and there is at least one clip of them on YouTube.

Apart from the casino theatres, drama and live performance art are probably only being practised in schools, colleges and universities in South Africa. The extent to which drama and the

other performance arts are taught in South Africa, we do not know, but we would expect that the graduates would mainly be headed for the television production studio and related industries, in any case.

Poetry

Poetry is something that continues to have a life. People are still writing poetry and performing it, live. Comrades sometimes publish their poems on the Communist University. Poetry lives, and is ready to have its day again.

- The above is to introduce our reading-text on [Song, Dance, Drama and Poetry](#).
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